

# COLLAGE: PORTRAIT POWER

Featuring artist Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou from the exhibition [FLEX](#)



Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou, *Untitled*, from the series *Musclemen*, 2012  
Chromogenic print, 59 x 39 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches, courtesy Jack Bell Gallery, London

## LOOK

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**The Tang Museum is dedicated to art and ideas. All art can spark new ideas and inspire creativity!**

- 1. Look closely:** Look at Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou's *Untitled*, pictured on the previous page.
2. What do you notice? Take a few minutes to write or discuss what you see. What kinds of colors and patterns do you recognize? Describe the body language and facial expressions of the figures. What are they holding? Does this look like a formal or informal portrait? Why?
- 3. Reflect:** Are photographs important to you and your family? What does this photograph remind you of? What do you think the artist is trying to express or communicate in this photograph?

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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Artist Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou (pronounced Ley-ons Raf-eye-el Ag-bo-jel-oo) was born in 1965 in Porto-Novo, the capital of the West African country of Benin. He learned about photography at a young age from his father, who was a photographer for the French army and who ran a successful photography studio in Porto-Novo. While his father worked in black-and-white photography, Agbodjélou works with color film to capture vibrant and saturated scenes of life in Porto-Novo.

## MAKE

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**Art Projects—feel free to be flexible with these ideas!**

**Suggested Materials:** Pencil, magazines, newspapers, colored pencils, markers, cardstock paper, construction paper—use whatever you have available!

### **Collage: Portrait Power**

What makes someone strong? What does strength look like? Is it about “inner” or “outer” strength? Both?

1. If you have a large piece of paper, have someone trace your full figure in a pose that you think suggests strength. If you can't do this with a partner, or don't have paper large enough, draw your own figure on any size of paper.
2. Using cutouts from magazines and newspapers or your own drawings, decorate the space inside of your figure with words, images, and patterns of things that make you feel strong and confident.
3. Decorate the space outside your figure to create a background that illustrates your strength.

## LEARN MORE

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The bodybuilder is a popular subject among photographers in West Africa and represents strength, power, and status. Agbodjélou's series on the subject, *Musclemen*, features bodybuilders from his hometown posed in dazzling, patterned clothing against colorful backdrops. By combining traditionally masculine features like hard muscles with traditionally feminine elements like flowers, the *Musclemen* series illustrates a new way to think about strength and power that breaks down boundaries and stereotypes.

## SHARE

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Take a photo of your work and post it on social media with the hashtag **#TangAtHome**  
**#ArtWithTheTang!**

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**For more art-making activities, check out:**  
<https://tang.skidmore.edu/education/tang-at-home>

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